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10 April 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR: SA/DDI - Mr. Komer

FROM : FE, O/NE - H. P. Ford

SUBJECT : Comment on Memorandum for the NSC Planning Board,
"Political Implications of Afro-Asian Military Takeovers,"
of 2 April 1959.

1. The study is a thoughtful, eloquent, and commendable attempt to sell a difficult policy course: that of generally accepting and working with military takeover regimes in Asia, while at the same time lessening the military emphasis (and image) of US policy. The study is an admirable one in many respects. It is fresh, frank, sophisticated, concerned with the long-range, and sympathetic to the desires of the Asian states for dignity, economic development, full independence, and (with some states) neutrality. Its assessments of the situation in the Far East are in the main consistent with National Estimates. This office shares its judgment that military takeover regimes in Asia are not necessarily bad per se, and may in fact (depending on the particular case) be the best available alternative for the given country and for US interests. The study's arguments could perhaps be made more forceful by certain revisions. The following are suggested.

2. The paper's impact might be increased if less discursive and redundant presentation, and tighter, more logical organization were used. The study attempts to discuss so much that there seem to be subjects left over which do not quite fit into a logical progression. An example is all

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the interesting but long-winded stuff which preceeds the (buried, but well-stated) heart of the paper: "Three Basic Questions," on pp. 13 ff. In addition, the behaviorist, conceptual language at times gets in the way of clarity.

3. The paper seems a bit mesmerized by economic determinism, expressed repeatedly (paras. 13-e, 15-b, 15-c, 24) in a great fear that the Asian countries may slip into Communism via discouragement with non-Communist economic development procedures and progressive adaptation of Marxist models. The study might modify this concern by reminding the reader that states are more likely to "slip" via either being overrun or themselves accommodating to external Communist pressures; and, furthermore, that a number of considerations (not discussed) inhibit any "slipping" process by Asian states: historic antagonisms with the Russians or the Chinese; the object lessons of Hungary, Tibet, and the rather joyless communes; rejection of Communist philosophy on religious and other grounds; desire for continuing independence; and US policies and power.

4. The paper's enthusiasm for its cause is admirable, but it weakens its case by an overoptimistic presentation which does not even take note of many of the great problems which confront its

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desired ends for US policy in Asia. It over-states the coincidence of US interests with those of the Asian states and peoples (paras. 13, 14, 27) and seems greatly to underplay the difficulties in shifting US support away from military emphasis. This is not to deny so much those points raised by the paper, as the failure to discuss also such problems as: (a) the sometime US bind betwixt the wishes of a NATO ally and those of an Asian state; (b) the unhappy fact of the need for indigenous military strength (and \$); (c) the difficulties involved in persuading Messrs. Chiang, Rhee, Diem, et al., that their military establishments should be sizably cut; (d) the fact that necessary US moves to deter aggression in Asia may at times also work to US disadvantage to the degree that allied and Asian states scurry to cover in fear of hostilities; (e) the many roadblocks (economic, military, and easy-living) in the path of economic growth in the Asian states; (f) the generally shaky nature of certain of these states; and (g) the great difficulties of communication between the US and the mass of Asia's people.

5. Minor points:

a. In several places the text encourages the Asian regimes to address themselves (only) to their developmental problems. In each instance (paras. 19-e, 21-a, 21-b), it would be well to add that US interests would also be served to the degree that a healthy political stability could be furthered in these countries.

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b. Para. 13-d-(i) should either be deleted or clarified, since "the Free World's alliance with human nature" depends for its force on whether the reader inclines toward Locke-- N. V. Peale or Freud--Nietzsche.

c. Annex B (The Far East) and the attachment on Burma are quite sound. We have no quarrel with the discussion of Thailand, but feel that this country should be dropped from the document, since last fall's "coup" was basically more of the same in Thailand, and rather different in kind from the other military takeovers discussed in the paper.

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